

Mrs. Wilkins Testifies On Merrywood Voting

CPYRGHT

A member of the Fairfax Board of County Supervisors testified in Circuit Court today that another board member, A. Claiborne Leigh, said he had voted to allow tower apartments on the Merrywood tract because he feared it would fail without his vote.

The testimony came from Mrs. Anne Wilkins, vice chairman of the board, in the second day of a trial of a suit by residents of the Merrywood area seeking to block the project.

Mrs. Wilkins and Board Chairman William H. Moss voted against rezoning for the tower apartments on the banks of the Potomac River. The rezoning passed, 5 to 2.

Political Reasons

Mrs. Wilkins said that it was her impression that Mr. Leigh, who represents the district in which Merrywood is located, would have preferred for political reasons to vote against the rezoning.

She told the court that she heard Mr. Leigh say he feared that if he moved to turn down the project that James Keith, who was then a supervisor, also would have voted against the project, killing it.

Mrs. Wilkins explained that the supervisors ordinarily give more weight to the recommendations of board members whose districts are involved in specific rezonings.

About 10 days before the hearing, Mrs. Wilkins said, Mr. Leigh visited her at her home and asked her if she would vote for the Merrywood project.

She said she told him she was opposed to it.

Earlier, Fred L. Burroughs, resident engineer of the Virginia Highway Department, testified that there were no present plans for widening Chain Bridge road, which runs past

Merrywood, from two to four lanes because there was no money available.

In the first day's testimony yesterday it was brought out that developers expect to begin construction of the project next spring.

Contract Copy

They believe that the lone obstacle now confronting them is the suit now being heard by Circuit Court Judge Paul E. Brown.

As the hearing began yesterday afternoon, Lytton Gibson, attorney for the developers, disclosed that financing already has been arranged for the apartment.

Mr. Gibson introduced into evidence a copy of a contract between the Federal Government and Virginia which he asserted unquestionably grants Fairfax the right to build a sewer across the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

The Department of the Interior has threatened to try to prevent erection of the high-density dwellings by denying use of the parkway for a sewer connection to them.

John A. Bross, a ranking CIA official, said the influx of apartment dwellers would destroy property values and generate noise, congestion and unmanageable traffic congestion.

Michael L. Lafont contended that the banks of the river should be preserved for future generations and said he was willing to sell his home and land for park purposes.

The rezoning was opposed vehemently by McLean citizens, more than 2,000 of whom signed a petition against it.

But Judge Brown refused to admit as evidence a map purporting to show the number and location of opponents.